

Building a Qualified Neurodiagnostic Workforce: The Need for Clinical Sites

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In the Summer 2017 issue of the *Clinical Neurophysiology News*, my ASET colleague, Anna Bonner, offered an article on the topic of recruiting neurodiagnostic technologists as it is well-known that a shortage of qualified neurodiagnostic technologists exists nationally.

According to the Commission for Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs, (CAAHEP), there are currently only 24 accredited Neurodiagnostic Technology programs (NDT) in the US. These programs generated 245 graduates in 2017, but a quick search for “EEG Technologist” on the employment search engine Indeed.com shows over 500 active job openings, many of which have multiple positions available. It is evident that there is an insufficient number of formal NDT educational programs to meet the need for highly skilled technologists throughout the country. Program directors have shared with ASET that the primary issue keeping NDT programs from expanding is the limitation of available clinical sites for students to complete their clinical practicum requirements.

A Clinical Site does not need to be located near a Neurodiagnostic Program

In addition to the traditional seated programs, there are distance-education programs offering internet-based courses, and these programs are capable of enrolling students anywhere in the US. Both seated and distance-education programs rely on clinical sites to give students the opportunity to learn the hands-on skills that are essential to the development of competency as a neurodiagnostic technologist. The number of graduates is directly related to the number of available clinical sites to partner with educational programs in support of building a qualified workforce.

The number of students assigned to a clinical site depends on the volume of patients and number of technologists available to serve as clinical instructors, with most labs able to accommodate only a few students at a time. The role of the clinical instructor is to assist in the development of hands-on skills that cannot be duplicated in a school's practice lab. Clinical instructors must be appropriately credentialed and clearly designated as a liaison to the program to provide instruction, supervision, and timely assessments of the student's progress in meeting program requirements. Clinical instructors do not need to be graduates of a formal NDT program and are not expected to give lectures to students, but should be very knowledgeable in the subject matter. Most NDT programs provide “Training the

Trainer” education for clinical site instructors either on campus or in a webinar format for distance-education programs.

Lab Accreditation is Not Required

While lab accreditation is a valuable goal, it is not required to serve as a clinical instructional site. It is helpful to have a good variety of patients and a high enough patient volume to assure good clinical exposure.

Benefits of becoming a Clinical Site = Recruitment

- Reduced costs associated with staff recruitment.
- Reduced costs associated with prospective employee interviews.
- Reduced costs associated with new employee orientation because of the student's familiarity with the department's policies and procedures.
- Increased staff retention: during the student's clinical site rotation, you and the student(s) have ample time to determine if future employment would be mutually beneficial.
- Increased patient satisfaction because the student(s) can assist technologists. Students can help reduce staff workload by assisting with daily tasks, paperwork and providing extra assistance needed for patient care. In addition, as the student's skills improve, staff technologists supervise and assist, thereby decreasing actual procedural time.
- When teaching, both students and staff learn. Students often motivate staff and provide incentive for them to sharpen their skills, review information previously learned and keep up with the new techniques and advancements in the field. For practicing technologists, continuing education is essential.
- When students attend more than one clinical affiliate site, it is not uncommon for there to be an exchange of new techniques and shared knowledge of new supplies among clinical facilities.

ASET maintains a clinical site database to assist programs in finding clinical sites for students. To avoid general inquiry calls, lab managers are protected from public access to the clinical site database. Contact information is released only to program directors upon request when searching for a clinical site in a specific area. Currently we have only 29 labs from across the country in the clinical site database. We need many

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more! One of the roadblocks to making more clinical sites available, is the knowledge gap regarding what is involved in serving as a clinical site.

ASET and the Committee on Accreditation for Education in Neurodiagnostic Technology (CoA-NDT) recently produced an electronic brochure to help us network to recruit clinical sites. I encourage you to view and share this brochure using this link: [Clinical Site Brochure](#).

In summary, I encourage you to consider the benefits of serving as a clinical site. I had the good fortune to serve as a clinical site instructor for fourteen years. This was one of the most rewarding experiences of my professional life. It is amazing to watch past students pursue their career goals, and I, too, gained

confidence while helping others learn. Teaching a new generation of neurodiagnostic technologists is essential to the future of clinical neurophysiology.

Additional Information and Resources:

- Link to ASET's [list of NDT programs in the U.S.](#)
- Link to the [list of distance education NDT programs](#).
- Questionnaire to enroll in [ASET's clinical site database](#).
- For a description of [Clinical Site Handbook, 2nd Edition with CD](#).
- To purchase the Clinical Site Handbook, 2nd Edition with CD, go to [ASET's online store](#) or call 816-931-1120, extension 102.

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News from the Journal of Clinical Neurophysiology

Aatif M. Husain, MD, FACNS—Editor-in-Chief

The *Journal of Clinical Neurophysiology (JCN)* has enjoyed another successful year of publishing contemporary topical reviews and original research. Several topical issues are being planned for next year, including ones on the Electrophysiology of Cranial Nerves, Functional Cortical Mapping, Montage Matters and others. The *JCN* website has seen enhancements as well, and new features, such as the "Red Journal Podcasts" and "Author Highlights" are now available. Please visit the website and see these features for yourself: <http://journals.lww.com/clinicalneurophys/pages/default.aspx>

I encourage you to submit your research papers or review articles to *JCN* for consideration. *JCN* reviewers do an excellent job evaluating manuscripts, and we are usually able to render the first decision within 30 days of submission. Case reports and letters to the editor are welcome as well. If you are the author of a clinical neurophysiology textbook or if you would like to review a new relevant text, please let me know. Ideas for topical issues are always welcome, and I encourage anyone who would like to serve as a guest editor of a topical issue to get in touch with me with their ideas. Instructions for authors can be found here: <http://journals.lww.com/clinicalneurophys/layouts/15/1033/oaks.journals/informationforauthors.aspx>

The second annual JCN Cosimo Ajmone-Marson Award will be presented at the 31st International Congress of Clinical Neurophysiology (ICCN 2018) in May 2018. This award is given to the best original research paper published in *JCN* in the last year. If you would like to nominate a paper published in 2017 for this award, please contact me.

I hope you will continue supporting and contributing to *JCN*. I welcome your thoughts on the Journal and suggestions for enhancements. Happy reading!

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